THE REFINER'S FIRE

ASHISH RAICHUR

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Contact Information:
All Peoples Church & World Outreach,
319, 2nd Floor, 7th Main, HRBR Layout,
2nd Block, Kalyan Nagar,
Bangalore 560043 Karnataka, INDIA

Phone: +91-80-25452617
Email: bookrequest@apcwo.org
Website: **apcwo.org**

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THE REFINER'S FIRE

Refiner's Fire

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1. THE REFINER AT WORK

Zechariah 13:9
I will bring the one-third through the fire, Will refine them as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, And I will answer them. I will say, 'This is My people'; And each one will say 'The LORD is my God.' "

Psalm 66:10–12
10 For you, O God, have tested us; You have refined us as silver is refined.
11 You brought us into the net; You laid affliction on our backs.
12 You have caused men to ride over our heads; We went through fire and through water; But You brought us out to rich fulfillment.

The accomplished refiner, either a goldsmith or silversmith, is the one who knows how to separate the pure metal from its alloy. He melts the ore in the refining pot or furnace. In the process of refining silver, lead is added to the ore. The lead is consumed as the alloys are drawn off. Once the dross, i.e., impurity, is removed, the metal can be fashioned into useful and ornamental articles. This process involves methods such as casting, beating with a hammer, plating, overlaying, and so on. Fire is essential in refining the ore.

The Bible teaches that God is a Refiner who refines His people. "*He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness*" (Malachi 3:3). Although this passage refers to a future work that God will do among His people, we understand from Scripture that God desires to refine His people even in this day and hour. The refining process requires the use of fire. Fire is used for purification and for testing the nature of the metal. God employs fire in the refining process through which He sends His people. When John the Baptist introduced Jesus, he said that Jesus came to baptize people with the Holy Ghost and fire. "*I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire*" (Matthew 3:11).

The Hebrew word for "refine" is '*tsaraph*' which means "to melt," "to refine," "to purify," "to try by fire," "to examine," and "to test." This verb is used to refer to the melting process by which impurities are removed from the precious metals. We will examine the Scripture, to learn what the fire that God uses to refine His people is. It is exciting to learn of the ways in which God works in the hearts and lives of those who have given themselves to Him. The more we know about the ways and patterns of God's working and

dealing with His people, the easier it is to submit and walk in step with Him. It is only when we are ignorant of the ways in which He works that we become stubborn and want to have our own ways. God gives us the grace to recognize that our God sits as a Refiner and Purifier of His people. Jesus will come for a Church that is without spot or wrinkle. This would necessarily require a process of purification. This book will make us wiser about the ways and purposes of God.

2. Fire For Purification

Psalm 51:6
Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom.

Fire is a symbol of purification. It maintains purity and cleanliness. When the people of Israel went to war and brought back their bounty, God instructed them that everything that could stand fire should be passed through the fire. He said, "*Everything that can endure fire, you shall put through the fire, and it shall be clean*" (Numbers 31:23a). Fire therefore has a purifying effect on whatever is passed through it.

The Bible teaches us that God desires truth in the inward parts—our inner man. "Truth," in the Hebrew, means "certainty," "stability," and "trustworthiness." It conveys a sense of dependability, firmness, and reliability. God wants people with these qualities—a people of truth, people who can be trusted with the eternal riches of the Kingdom, people who can be depended upon to stand for God in this day and hour.

When the people of God sinned and wandered in wickedness, God said, "*I will turn My hand against you, and thoroughly purge* ('tsaraph,' refine) *away your dross, and take away all your alloy*" (Isaiah 1:25). In this context, "dross" and "alloy" speak figuratively of sin. Once again, God was using the symbolism of the refiner and his work to refer to the purification that He would bring about among His people. We see a similar statement in Jeremiah. "*Your dwelling place is in the midst of deceit; Through deceit they refuse to know Me," says the Lord. Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts: "Behold, I will refine them and try them; For how shall I deal with the daughter of My people*?" (Jeremiah 9:6-7). God brings His people through the fire so that He can purify them and make them into a people whose inward man is true. The Psalmist prayed, "*Create in me a clean heart*" (Psalm 51:10a). This ought to be our prayer too, as we allow God to purify us and make us a people of truth. It is wonderful to read what the angel told Daniel concerning the end times. "*Many shall be purified, made white, and refined*" (Daniel 12:10a). I want to be a part of the "many" who will be purified, made white, and refined. I trust you do too!

3. Fire For Testing

Psalm 7:9b
For the righteous God tests the hearts and minds.

Fire is also a symbol for testing of character. In talking about the judgment for believers, the Bible states that fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is (1 Corinthians 3:13). Fire determines the character and true nature of a substance. So, God takes us through the fire to see what kind of people we really are—what is really in our hearts. Yes! God knows the thoughts and intents of our hearts. And it seems rather unnecessary for God to send us through the fire just to examine and test us to determine our true qualities. However, from Scripture we learn that God does just this. He tests the hearts of His people by placing them in the refiner's fire. "*The LORD tests the righteous*" (Psalm 11:5a). Just as metals are tested in furnace, God tests the hearts of His people. "*The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, but the Lord tests the hearts*" (Proverbs 17:3). David declared in his prayer, "*I know also, my God, that You test the heart and have pleasure in uprightness*" (1 Chronicles 29:17a). The Hebrew word for test is '*nasah*' and is also translated as "try," "prove," and "tempt." It carries the basic idea of putting someone to the test, to see how that person responds.

It is interesting to read about the ways in which God tested His people in the Old Testament. Moses, while talking about the wilderness journey, told the people of Israel, "*And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD*" (Deuteronomy 8:2-3). Both David and Jeremiah talked about God having tested their hearts. "*You have tested my heart; You have visited me in the night; You have tried me and have found nothing; I have purposed that my mouth shall not transgress*" (Psalm 17:3). "*But You, O LORD, know me; You have seen me, and You have tested my heart toward You. Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and prepare them for the day of slaughter*" (Jeremiah 12:3). Will we be able to pray as the Psalmist prayed, "*Examine (search) me, O LORD, and prove me; Try (refine) my mind and my heart"* (Psalm 26:2)?

4. WHAT THE FIRE IS

Malachi 3:2
But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like launderers' soap.

What is the "fire" that God uses to refine His people? What is the "furnace" or "refining pot," where God purifies and tests us? From a study of Scripture, we come to three possible conclusions.

The Fire Is The Presence Of God

Deuteronomy 4:24
For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.

Deuteronomy 4:24 and Hebrews 12:29 tell us that our God is a consuming fire. Many references to the presence of God in the Old Testament are in connection with the visible manifestation of fire. "*Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire"* (Exodus 19:18a). *"The sight of the glory of the Lord was like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain* …" (Exodus 24:17).

When we enter into the presence of God, we enter the presence of the One who is a consuming fire. In this context, "consuming" means that whatever is not acceptable in His presence will be burned and destroyed. I have been in meetings and in times of prayer when the presence of God as a consuming fire was so strong. All we did was to stay still, sometimes with tears flowing down our cheeks. We knew that God was doing a deep work of searching, examining, cleansing, and purifying in our hearts. Oh! How we need this today, in an ever-increasing measure. God Himself is like a Refiner's fire. Abiding in His presence will cause us to be refined.

The Fire Is The Word Of God

God questions in Jeremiah 23:29a, "*Is not My Word like a fire*?" God's Word is like fire that burns and consumes. God's Word both purifies and tries our hearts. It penetrates as far as the division of the soul and spirit, exposing and judging the very thoughts and intentions of the heart (Hebrews 4:12, Amplified Bible). We read about a man named Joseph in the Old Testament. God had spoken to him through dreams, showing him the glorious future that he would have. However, he was sold as a slave and taken to a faraway country. He was cut off from his family. And in that distant land, he was thrown

into prison for no fault of his. *"He* (God) *sent a man before them* (the people of Israel)— *Joseph— who was sold as a slave. They hurt his feet with fetters, he was laid in irons. Until the time that his Word came to pass, the Word of the LORD tested him*" (Psalm 105:17–19). Why did Joseph go through what he went through? One of the reasons is stated here. The Word of God tested and tried Joseph. God's Word is like fire—it tests and purifies. When God speaks to our hearts and deposits His Word in us, that Word will do a work of purifying and testing in us, before it comes to pass.

The Fire Is Circumstances, Hardships, And Trials

We find numerous occasions when God used circumstances and situations to test the hearts of His people. Some of these circumstances were just acts of obedience that God required of His people. Others were uncommon situations where His people found themselves in and God "stood back" to see what they would do. And still some others were fiery trials and a furnace of affliction that tested and tried the people of God.

God tested Abraham by requiring an act of obedience from him. "*Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." Then He said, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you""* (Genesis 22:1-2). *"And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me""* (Genesis 22:12). Abraham passed the test successfully!

Egypt, the land of slavery was an iron furnace for the people of God. "*But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be His people, an inheritance, as you are this day*" (Deuteronomy 4:20).

The wilderness, as we saw earlier, was a place where God tested the hearts of His people. "*And you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord*" (Deuteronomy 8:2-3).

God was testing His people when He gave them instructions about collecting the manna that He provided. "*Then the Lord said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not*""" (Exodus 16:4).

God sometimes allowed the word of a false prophet to come to pass, so that He could

test His people. "*If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods'—which you have not known—'and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the Lord your God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul*" (Deuteronomy 13:1–3).

God allowed for enemies against Israel, so that He could later use them to test His people. "*Then the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel; and He said, "Because this nation has transgressed My covenant which I commanded their fathers, and has not heeded My voice, I also will no longer drive out before them any of the nations which Joshua left when he died, so that through them I may test Israel, whether they will keep the ways of the LORD, to walk in them as their fathers kept them, or not." Therefore the LORD left those nations, without driving them out immediately; nor did He deliver them into the hand of Joshua*" (Judges 2:20–23).

King Hezekiah found himself in a situation with ambassadors from Babylon when God withdrew from him to test him. "*However, regarding the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, whom they sent to him to inquire about the wonder that was done in the land, God withdrew from him, in order to test him, that He might know all that was in his heart*"(2 Chronicles 32:31).

God tells His people, "*I have tested you in the furnace of affliction*" (Isaiah 48:10b). Afflictions (not sickness and disease), hardships, and trials can be the "furnace" where we are tested, tried, and purified. "*In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ*" (1 Peter 1:6-7).

5. Everyone Will Be Salted With Fire

Mark 9:49-50
49 For everyone will be seasoned with fire, and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt.
50 Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another.

Fire produces seasoning—development and maturity. Seasoning i.e., the salting process, also acts as a preservative. Note that Jesus said that everyone will be salted with fire. There is no one who can escape the process of salting or seasoning by fire. Many Christians being ignorant of this working of God, become offended when God sets out to begin the salting process in their lives. We need to realize that nothing can counteract or substitute the salting process if one desires to continue with God. The only thing that God requires is submission and yielding to His hand. When we run away from the seasoning with fire, we then lack salt in ourselves. We are people without flavor. We cannot influence the world around us.

Look at the example of Jesus. Speaking prophetically of Jesus, the Scripture says, "*Therefore thus says the Lord God: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; whoever believes will not act hastily*"" (Isaiah 28:16; Also see 1 Peter 2:6). How was Jesus tried? And what purpose did this serve in His life? "*For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings"* (Hebrews 2:10). Once again in Hebrews 5:8-9 we read, *"Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him*." Even Jesus had to go through the "seasoning with fire." Jesus had to endure suffering and it was through this that He learned obedience and proved Himself qualified to be the author of our salvation. He was perfected—made complete, brought to maturity—by the things He suffered.

6. When We Walk Through The Fire

Job 23:10–12
10 But He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.
11 My foot has held fast to His steps; I have kept His way and not turned aside.
12 I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.

Perhaps you find yourself in the midst of the fire. Perhaps, God has begun the seasoning process in your life—you are being seasoned with fire. Or maybe it is still ahead, and that season of your life is yet to come. What can we do during the time and season of our lives when God is refining us, in the refiner's fire?

We have the example of Job. Regardless of what Job's mistake was, we need to admire him and learn from his life. Someone who passed through trials and adversity and came out triumphant, will surely have some valuable lessons to teach us. Job declared that God knew the way he was going and when it was all over, he would come forth as gold. We need to develop such an understanding and perspective of the way in which God leads us. During such a time, we must hold fast to God's Word and not turn aside.

Another important aspect about Job is his patience. We are told, "*You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful*" (James 5:11b). The testing of your faith produces patience and, consequently, if we will allow patience to run her full course, we will be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. "*My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing*" (James 1:2–4). As we remain patient, we allow God to work in us, and fulfill His good intent. We are therefore to count it all joy when we fall into various trials.

We have the example of Jesus who learned through what He suffered. There are many important things that God will speak into our hearts, during such seasons of life.

And then we have the promise of the Lord that even when we walk through the fire we will not be burned, nor will the flame scorch us. *"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you"* (Isaiah 43:2). He is with us through it all and therefore no evil shall overcome us.

7. The Value Of It All

Proverbs 25:4
Take away the dross from silver, and it will go to the silversmith for jewelry.

God's people are His jewels. God says about those who fear His name, "*They shall be Mine … "On the day that I make them My jewels*" (Malachi 3:17a). Before we can be fashioned into being His jewels, the dross has to be removed. Sometimes this may mean we go through the fire many times, "*Like silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times*" (Psalm 12:6b). But what joy fills our being, knowing that one day we will be made into His jewels! We will be for His glory and praise. He will be proud of us and "wear" us proudly.

Apostle Paul admonished, "*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*" (2 Timothy 2:15). Those who have been tested by trial and have stood will find themselves workmen approved unto God, fit for the Master's use to gather in this end-time harvest. We need to learn to love the One who sits as a Refiner and Purifier of His people.

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At All Peoples Church (APC), our vision is to be salt and light in the city of Bangalore and a voice to the nation of India and to the nations of the world.

At APC, we are committed to presenting the complete, uncompromised Word of God in the anointing and demonstration of His Holy Spirit. We believe that good music, creative presentations, brilliant apologetics, contemporary ministry techniques, latest technology, and so on, can never substitute the God-ordained approach of proclaiming the Word in the power of the Holy Spirit with signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:4-5; Hebrews 2:3-4). Our theme is Jesus, our content is the Word, our method is Holy Spirit power, our passion is people, and our goal is Christlike maturity.

With our main base in Bangalore, All Peoples Church has several other church locations in India. To get a current listing and contact information of All Peoples Church locations, please visit our website at **www.apcwo.org/locations** or send an email to **contact@apcwo.org**.

DO YOU KNOW THE GOD WHO LOVES YOU?

About 2000 years ago, God came into this world as a man. His name is Jesus. He lived a perfectly sinless life. Since Jesus was God in flesh, everything He said and did revealed God to us. The words He spoke were the very words of God. The things He did were the actions of God. Jesus did many miracles on the Earth. He healed the sick and suffering. He opened blind eyes, unstopped deaf ears, made the lame to walk and healed every kind of sickness and disease. He fed the hungry by miraculously multiplying a few loaves of bread, calmed the storm and did many other wonderful things.

All of these actions reveal to us that God is a good God who wants people to be well, whole, healthy, and happy. God wants to meet the needs of people.

So why then would God decide to become a man and step into our world? Why did Jesus come?

All of us have sinned and done things that are unacceptable before the God who created us. Sin has its consequences. Sin is like a great unsurpassable wall between God and us. Sin separates us from God. It prevents us from knowing and having a meaningful relationship with the One who created us. Therefore, many of us try to fill this void with other things.

Another consequence of our sins is eternal separation from God. In God's court, the penalty for sin is death. Death is eternal separation from God in hell.

But the good news is that we can be free from sin and be restored to God. The Bible says, *"***For the wages [payment] of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*"* (Romans 6:23).** Jesus paid for the sins of the whole world when He died on the cross. Then, three days later He rose again, showed Himself alive to many and then went back into heaven.

God is a God of love and mercy. He does not wish that any person be lost in hell. And so He came, to provide a way for the entire human race to be free from sin and its lasting consequences. He came to save sinners—to rescue people like you and me from sin and eternal death.

To receive this free forgiveness of sins, the Bible tells us that we have to do just one thing—accept what the Lord Jesus Christ did on the cross and to believe in Him whole-heartedly.

"… through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive forgiveness of sins" (Acts 10:43).

… "That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9).

You too can receive forgiveness and cleansing for your sins if you will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The following is a simple prayer to help you make a decision to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and what He has done for you on the cross. This prayer will help you express your acceptance of what Jesus has done for you and receive forgiveness and cleansing for your sins. This prayer is only a guideline. You can also pray in your own words.

Dear Lord Jesus, today, I have understood what You did for me on the cross. You died for me, you shed Your precious blood and paid the penalty for my sins, so that I could be forgiven. The Bible tells me that whoever believes in You will receive forgiveness for their sins.

Today, I make a decision to believe in You and to accept what You did for me, by dying for me on the cross and rising again from the dead. I know I cannot save myself by my own good works, neither can any other human save me. I cannot earn forgiveness for my sins.

Today, I believe in my heart and say with my mouth that You died for me, You paid the penalty for my sins, You rose again from the dead, and by faith in You, I receive forgiveness and cleansing for my sins..

Thank You Jesus. Help me to love You, to know You more and to be faithful to You.
Amen.

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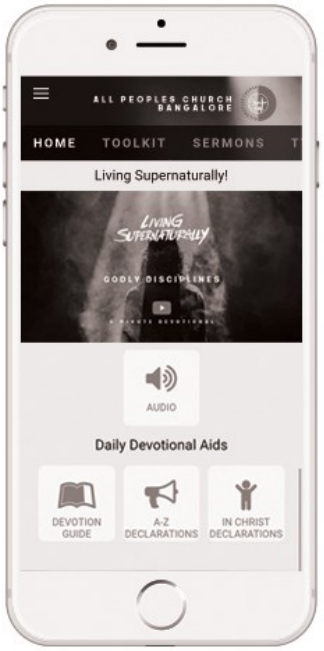

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Classes are held each weekday, **Monday to Friday from 9:00am-1pm**. Day scholars, working professionals, and home-makers can attend these classes and continue with their workday after 1pm. Separate hostel facilities are available for men and women who desire to be residential students. Students participate in field work, special seminars, prayer and worship times in the afternoon sessions, each weekday from 2pm-5pm. The afternoon sessions are optional for day scholars (non-residential students). All students are encouraged to serve at one or more local churches over the weekends.

To **apply online**, and for more information about the college, curriculum, eligibility criteria, tuition costs and to download the application form, please visit: **apcbiblecollege.org**

APC-BC is accredited by the Nations Association for Theological Accreditation (NATA).

It is exciting to learn of the ways in which God works in the hearts and lives of those who have given themselves to Him. The more we know about the ways and patterns of God's working and dealing with His people, the easier it is to submit and walk in step with Him. It is only when we are ignorant of the ways in which He works that we become stubborn and want to have our own way. God gives us the grace to recognize that our God sits as a Refiner and Purifier of His people. Jesus will come for a Church that is without spot or wrinkle. This would necessarily require a process of purification. This book will make us wiser about the ways and purposes of God.

Ashish Raichur

All Peoples Church & World Outreach
319, 2nd Floor, 7th Main, HRBR Layout,
2nd Block, Kalyan Nagar, Bangalore 560 043
Karnataka, INDIA

Phone: +91-80-25452617
Email: contact@apcwo.org
Website: apcwo.org